

## Message Text

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70

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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/100 W

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R 091631Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0797

INFO AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, EG, LY

SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN PRESS COVERAGE OF LIBYAN KIDNAPPING ATTEMPTS

1. LOCAL DAILIES MARCH 9, FOR THIRD DAY IN ROW, PROMINENTLY  
FEATURE STORIES ON WRONGDOINGS OF LIBYAN AGENTS, BOTH  
IN EGYPT AND IN EUROPE. SPATE OF STORIES BEGAN WITH LURID  
FEATURES IN CAIRO PRESS MARCH 7 DETAILING ATTEMPT BY THREE  
LIBYAN AGENTS TO KIDNAP FUGITIVE RCC MEMBER AND FONMIN AL-HUNI  
DURING HIS TRAVEL FROM CAIRO TO ROME PREVIOUS DAY. QUOTING  
OFFICIAL EGYPTIAN SOURCES, PAPERS STATE THAT THREE LIBYANS,  
MEMBERS OF "SA'IQA" (PARATROOP) BATTALION AT 'UQBA BIN NAFI'  
AIR BASE, HAD BEEN ON ALITALIA AIRCRAFT, ON WHICH AL-HUNI  
ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED TO TRAVEL, WITH TICKETS PURCHASED BY LIBYAN

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RELATIONS OFFICE IN CAIRO. WHEN EGYPTIANS DISCOVERED THAT

LIBYANS, WHO HAD BEEN UNDER SURVEILLANCE BY GDSSI, WERE TO TRAVEL ON AL-HUNI PLANE, EX-LIBYAN FONMIN WAS SHIFTED AT LAST MINUTE TO DIFFERENT AIRCRAFT AND THREE LIBYANS WERE ARRESTED UPON ARRIVAL IN ROME.

2. SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH ROME ARRESTS, EGYPTIAN GDSSI SEIZED SEVEN CAIRO-BASED LIBYAN UNDERCOVER PARATROOPERS (ALLEGEDLY LIVING IN EGYPT WITH PAPERS IDENTIFYING THEM AS LIBYAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS), ON CHARGE THAT THEY ATTEMPTING TO ARRANGE KIDNAPPING OF LIBYAN EX-PLANNING MINISTER MUHAYSHI FROM CAIRO TO TRIPOLI.

3. INTERROGATIONS BY GDSSI OF SEVEN ARRESTEES ALLEGEDLY PRODUCED CONFESSIONS THAT THEY ARE MEMBERS OF PARATROOP BATTALION 219, UNDER COMMAND OF CAPTAIN MUHAMMAD MUHAMMAD AL-KILANI, WHO INSTRUCTED THEM TO TRAVEL TO EGYPT AND TO CONTACT INDIVIDUAL AT LIBYAN RELATIONS OFFICE WHO WOULD PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR OPERATION AGAINST MUHAYSHI. CONFESSIONS, ACCORDING TO CAIRO PRESS VERSION, STATE THAT CAPTIAN KILANI INFORMED PARAGROPPERS THAT ORDERS TO SEIZE MUHAYSHI EMANATED DIRECTLY FROM RCC CHAIRMAN QADHAFI.

4. DAILIES MARCH 9 AMPLIFY ITEM FROM PREVIOUS DAYS' PAPERS WHICH REPORTED THAT TUNISIAN EX-FONMIN MASMUDI DETAINED IN CONNECTION WITH AL-HUNI/MUHAYSHI AFFAIR. MARCH 9 PAPERS RELATE MASMUDI STATEMENTS TO GDSSI INTERROGATORS THAT, AT REQUEST OF QADHAFI, HE HAD TRAVELLED TO CAIRO TO ATTEMPT TO PERSUADE BOTH AL-HUNI AND MUHAYSHI TO RETURN TO TRIPOLI VOLUNTARILY. MASMUDI STATED THAT HE HAD MET WITH BOTH FUGITIVE LEADERS BUT HAD BEEN UNABLE TO CONVINCE THEM TO LEAVE SELF-IMPOSED CAIRO EXILE. MASMUDI FURTHER RELATED THAT, AFTER HIS FUTILE INTERVIEWS WITH FUGITIVE RCC MEMBERS, HE HAD REPORTED LOCATION OF AL-HUNI AND MUHAYSHI RESIDENCES IN CAIRO TO CHIEF OF LIBYAN RELATIONS OFFICE, WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN UNABLE TO ASCERTAIN THEIR WHEREABOUTS. MASMUDI DENIED THAT HE WAS AWARE OF ANY INTENTION ON PART OF LIBYAN OFFICIALS TO USE COERCISION TO INDUCE MUHAYSHI/AL-HUNI TO RETURN TO TRIPOLI, BUT AKHBAR MARCH 9 REPORTS THAT DIRECTOR OF LIBYAN RELATIONS OFFICE IN CAIRO DEPARTED FOR TRIPOLI SUDDENLY IN WAKE OF CONTINUING REVELATIONS OF LIBYAN WRONGDOING.  
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5 SECOND LEAD IN AHRAH MARCH 9 WIDENS CAMPAIGN AGAINST LIBYANS. QUOTING BRITISH SUNDAY TIMES AND GUARDIAN, AHRAH STATES THAT QADHAFI HAD PLANNED TO USE INTERNATIONAL TERRORIST CARLOS IN FEBRUARY, IN UNSPECIFIED COUNTRY, TO ABDUCT SAUDI DIPLOMATS AND "AN EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR," WHO WOULD BE RETURNED IN EXCHANGE FOR MUHAYSHI AND AL-HUNI. AKHBAR MARCH 9 ALSO EMBELLISHES PREVIOUS STORIES OF LIBYAN WRONGDOING IN CAIRO

AND REPORTS THAT FIVE GROUPS CONTAINING 20 INDIVIDUALS FROM 219 PARATROOP BATTALION (IN ADDITION TO SEVEN PARATROOPERS CURRENTLY UNDER DETENTION) HAD INFILTRATED EGYPT FOR PURPOSE OF CAMPAIGN OF ASSASSINATIONS AND SABOTAGE WITHIN EGYPT. QUOTING SOURCES IN OFFICE OF HIGH PROSECUTOR FOR STATE SECURITY, DAILIES REPORT THAT LIBYAN PARATROOP INFILTRATORS AROUSED SUSPICIONS OF EGYPTIAN SECURITY AUTHORITIES AS ALL UNDERCOVER LIBYANS REPORTEDLY WEARING VIRTUALLY IDENTICAL CLOTHING, IN ADDITION TO PAPERS IDENTIFYING THEM AS STATE EMPLOYEES. ALL PAPERS MAKE POINT THAT, UNDER REGULATIONS OF CONFEDERATED ARAB REPUBLICS, EGYPTIAN SECURITY AUTHORITIES HAD DIFFICULT TIME KEEPING TRACK OF LIBYAN INFILTRATORS, AS REGULATIONS OF CAR DO NOT REQUIRE LIBYAN VISITORS EITHER TO REGISTER WITH POLICE OR TO TAKE OUT RESIDENCE PAPERS. PAPERS MAKE POINT, HOWEVER, THAT SIMILAR TREATMENT NOT PRACTISED BY LIBYANS TOWARD EGYPTIANS WORKING IN LIBYA. EGYPTIAN NATIONALS, EGYPTIAN PRESS POINTS OUT, ARE SUBJECTED TO SURVEILLANCE, HARRASSMENT, AND STRICT CONTROLS.

6. COMMENT: ATTEMPT TO KIDNAP AL-HUNI AND DISCOVERY OF POTENTIAL LIBYAN TERRORIST CELLS IN CAIRO HAVE AFFORDED EGYPTIAN PRESS FIRST OPPORTUNITY SINCE AUGUST 1975 TO ENGAGE IN SUSTAINED CAMPAIGN AGAINST QADHAFI REGIME. LEAD STORIES FOLLOWING ORIGINAL MARCH 6 ARRESTS HAVE BEEN BANNER-HEADLINED AND LOCAL PRESS APPEARS TO BE DRIFTING FURTHER AND FURTHER AFIELD FROM ORIGINAL FOILED HIGH-JACK ATTEMPT. ENTRY OF PRO-LIBYAN EX-FONMIN MASMUDI ESCALATED AFFAIR TO PAN-ARAB LEVEL AND MORE REVELATIONS APPEAR LIKELY, AS MASMUI HAS BEEN INSTRUCTED NOT TO LEAVE COUNTRY UNTIL GDSSI INVESTIGATION COMPLETE. SHOULD FUROR OVER LIBYAN MACHINATIONS IN CAIRO CONTINUE, IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT MEMOIRES OF MUHAYSHI MAY AT LAST BE PRODUCED IN ANTI-LIBYAN BARRAGE.  
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